

Opportunity and Obligation

I was recently honored by the European Association of Machine Tool Merchants (EAMTM) at the organization's annual meeting this past June in Mallorca, Spain. The organization inducted me as a Fellow, EAMTM's highest honor, bestowed on members who have made significant contributions as volunteers serving the organization, which was originally founded in 1940. I felt especially honored, as I am only the 19th person and the second non-European to have been given this award.

In addition to being the publisher of *Gear Technology*, I am also the president of Cadillac Machinery Co., Inc., one of the world's largest dealers in used gear manufacturing equipment. Over the years, I've been an active volunteer in the associations of the used machinery business, including the Machinery Dealers National Association (MDNA). I served on MDNA's board of directors from 1976 to 1993 and on its executive committee from 1980 to 1993. I still serve as head of the investment committee for the MDNA's scholarship fund. I've been on the EAMTM board for more than 12 years and am now the second longest serving member.

Receiving this wonderful honor has caused me to reflect on my years of volunteer work in the associations, especially the opportunities that work has provided me, but also the obligation I feel we all have to help the industries which support us.

Working within a volunteer organization can provide great opportunities to learn and grow. For example, I got my start in publishing working as a volunteer for the MDNA, whose subsidiary, Machinery Information Systems (MIS), publishes a directory of used machine tools called the *Locator*. I sat on the board of trustees of MIS for 17 years, served as an officer for eight years and served as its president from 1981 to 1983.

When faced with major business decisions at MIS—buying a mainframe computer, buying a computerized typesetter, negotiating printers' contracts—it was we volunteers who had to do the job. Most viewed those tasks as chores, but I looked at them as opportunities to learn about computers, typesetting and printing.

As I learned about areas outside my normal business, I felt as though I was preparing for something, that the work I was doing



on the *Locator* would be important down the road. I was right: After finishing my presidency at MIS in May 1983, I was able to launch *Gear Technology* the very next year. Without the knowledge and experience I had gained on the *Locator*, starting *Gear Technology* would have been more difficult, if not impossible.

In addition to gaining knowledge and experience, working as a volunteer provides many opportunities to improve your people skills. In a volunteer organization, you work with people who aren't beholden to you. Often, they're people with different agendas, and you have to get them to work together to solve problems.

Working in one of your industry's volunteer organizations exposes you to different people; some are your competitors, some end up being lifelong friends. By meeting and working with these people, you're exposed to different approaches, ideas and ways of doing things—not better, not worse, but different. These different viewpoints, approaches and perspectives can be useful when meeting your own business challenges. It also allows you a larger perspective of the industry and how and where your company fits in.

But the opportunities and personal satisfaction I've received from participating in these organizations aren't the only reasons I've given my time. I've always felt obligated to give something back to the industries that have been good to me. In one sense, that obligation comes from a respect for the work of the people who came before me. Two of those people were my father and grandfather, who were founding members of the MDNA in 1941, and seeing their contributions as volunteers was part of my training. In another sense, I feel obligated to contribute to the success of future generations.

The gear industry is affected by organizations that rely on volunteers. Hard work over the years has made this industry more organized and has made it run more smoothly. As a good example, can you imagine where we would be without industry standards? Over the years, AGMA's and other standards have been put together by many busy volunteers who took the time to get together and create them. The rest of us benefit from their work every day.

It's easy to sit back and reap the benefits of other people's hard work. But I feel we owe it to those volunteers, and to those who will follow us, to plant some seeds of our own. I volunteer in industry organizations so that when I'm done with my career, I'll be able to look back and see that I've made a contribution. When you look back on your own career, what will you see?

Michael Goldstein, Publisher & Editor-in-Chief